

APRIL 3, 2022
4th Sunday of Lent – 3rd Scrutiny
Ezekiel 37: 12-14; Romans 8: 8-11; John 11: 3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

“UNBIND AND COME FORTH.”

“A little boy was asked to give blood to his injured brother because he possessed the same rare blood type. Realizing that his brother would die without this blood, he agreed. When the transfusion was completed, the young donor asked the doctor, “Now, when will I die?” We are moved by the innocent courage of a child who would give his blood to his brother thinking that it would cost him his life. Our Lord, however, knew for certain that the blood needed to save humankind was a total transfusion. To raise Lazarus and us to eternal life, our Lord literally had to bleed to death for us. To give life to us, Jesus had to give his life for us.”¹

My dear sisters and brothers, we are on the last Sunday of Lent. After focussing on our conversion, sacrifices, penance, and act of love and mercy, we focus now on the life after death. Life that only God can give not what the earth can give, that is everlasting life. Prophet Ezekiel in our first reading speaks about words of hope to the Israelites. God says that He will bring them back to the land of Israel, bring them up from their graves. “I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”² It seems that Ezekiel is speaking about the resurrection, maybe yes, but he focusses more on the energy of the people and hope that they need to possess. All their sufferings will be wiped away because God promise them life even if they die along their journey. There is life after death.

This is also what our gospel is telling us when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. We can notice that Jesus spends another two days before going to Bethany in Judea.

¹ stories4homilies.blogspot.com

² Ezekiel 37: 14 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

What is His purpose? He said: "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."³ We can see here why God sometimes 'silent' in our prayers, it seems 'doing nothing' in what is happening to us during this pandemic, war and conflict around the world, and why leaders who does not care of the effect of war 'not punished' by God. Jesus stayed for two days before going to Bethany so that the glory of God be revealed. He has its own plan and purpose. Maybe we do not understand why bad things happen to good people, why there is pandemic and war, but God has its own way of telling us His message, His purpose, and His plan. Wait, have faith and see, God has plan for you. Do not be afraid, He will end all of this. This is His assurance so witness in the raising of Lazarus. He will give us life forever.

Jesus raised Lazarus and the glory and power of God was uncovered, revealed, and manifested. Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus expressed their belief in Jesus, the required attitude for Jesus to show mercy and love, life after death. "In Jesus we see the care and concern of our God for all who suffer. St. John wrote his gospel for the Greeks, who believed that God was unmoved by the human condition. John paints a different portrait of a God who does not look upon the world apathetically but is constantly involved in it and interacts with it. The death of Lazarus does not mean that it is too late for Jesus to be his life. When Jesus reached the tomb, he asks that the stone covering the tomb be taken away. For Jesus time, like death itself, is no barrier: 'If you believe, you will see the glory of God.' Before Jesus works the miracle, He prays, He has full trust that His Father will listen to him. In a loud voice, Jesus calls: 'Lazarus come forth!' The miracle is that hearing the voice of the Son of God, Lazarus lives again."⁴

My brothers and sisters, every time we hear the words of God in the Sacred Scriptures, in the readings, in the gospel proclaimed, are we move by it? Are we change by it to make us better and live it?

³ John 11: 4 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

⁴ stories4homilies.blogspot.com

The reading from prophet Ezekiel “is part of the famous parable of the valley full of dead bones which are brought to life, a parable about Israel, dead in sin and idolatry, being brought back to life in God. In today’s gospel, Lazarus represents all those who are being brought back to life, life in God. He represents especially all those who are brought into new life by baptism, sharing the very life of God. (Scrutiny: Like the gospels of the last two Sundays, the Samaritan Woman and the Man Born Blind, this reading is directed at those preparing for Baptism at Easter.) Baptism, as Paul tells us, is both a dying to one’s past and an entry into new life. The newly baptised person is ‘a new person’ with a new life. For us already baptised, we can do well to reflect on how much we have continued to see that life growing in us. That is the theme of Paul in the Second Reading. Those whose lives are embedded in the ‘flesh’, that is, those whose lives are given over to their instincts of greed and self-indulgence, can never be close to God.”⁵

My brothers and sisters, the challenge for us today in this last Sunday of Lent before the Palm Sunday, is to be alive again and unbind ourselves as we prepare for Easter celebration. Come forth. Be alive! The raising of Lazarus is a story of hope and proclaims that Jesus is the Lord of Life. Our life as Christians begins when we listen to His words, obey, and live it. Along the way of life, we may be dead of sins, apathetic and unconcern with others, no faith but Jesus will bring us life again, and again as we come near Him. Like Lazarus, He will raise us up. So, let us come forth and live again in Jesus.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, I know you have plan for me and for the world, I will be patient and wait to grant my request even if you delay your response to my petitions. May I come forth, unbind and raise me up from my sinfulness, take away my greed and unconcern with others. May I always be with you to have life. I believe that you are my Messiah, my resurrection, and my life. Amen."

⁵ livingspace.sacredspace.ie